

# the presbyterian banner

May 2017

*...he leads me beside quiet waters...*  
Psalm 23:2b



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Editor:  
Rev. Sjirk Bajema  
44 Prospect Hill Road,  
Narre Warren, VIC  
AUSTRALIA 3805  
Ph. (03) 9705 1505  
Email: sjirkb@gmail.com

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## Editorial

It has been fascinating reading through historical copies of our denominational magazines. Back in the 1920's there were concerns as to the way society was going in regards to the Sabbath day, there was news from the churches, and there were addresses and sermons. In the annual Synod review you read about news of the mission work in South Africa, South America and India, the Jewish mission, details about students for the ministry, church extension, reports on Sabbath Schools, Religion and Morals, Welfare of Youth, Publications, Church Principles, and the Treasurer's Statement.

The great struggle within Australian Christendom then was liberalism and this was clearly brought out and addressed in those pages. In the August 1926 issue of *The Free Church Monthly*, there is the rebuke of a Roman Catholic priest to Protestants in connection with this. When asked why so many Protestants were coming back to Rome, he replied, "There was a time when Protestants believed something and taught something. That time has gone by, except for the Lutherans and a few others. Protestant Churches are mainly social organisations, with all sorts of clubs and activities, recreational and pleasure programmes with little spiritual seasoning in the form of a denatured Church service and a haphazard Sunday School meeting thrown in. The heart of the Church service is the music, with an exhortation to goodness or moral conduct, or a discussion of some social problems or economic situation, in the form of a sermon. What is the result? Protestant people are spiritually starved. Ninety-nine of out a hundred cannot tell even the most elementary things which they believe as distinctly Protestant. They are not being taught anything."

That priest concluded, "If Protestantism is wise, it will make religious teaching its main theme, and all these things secondary."

Now, this was in our magazine over ninety years ago. Essentially this situation hasn't changed, has it? How much doesn't this challenge us to teach our children and teach them well? And how much doesn't it exhort us to keep preaching and studying the scriptures, and openly teaching the biblical doctrines?

*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season;  
correct, rebuke and encourage –  
with great patience and careful instruction.  
2 Timothy 4:2*

*Photo Credit: Cover: Te Waikoropupu Springs (Pupu Springs), Takaka, Golden Bay, New Zealand*

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## What Genesis Teaches Us About Marriage

### Genesis 2:18-25

When I was young I had music lessons for quite a few years. As well as learning the skill of playing a piano, I also learned to read music. It is made up of various signs and words. One word was 'Crescendo.' Many of you will know what that means. It's where the music starts quietly and gradually becomes louder, usually leading to a climax.

Much like music building up to a climax so the crescendo of chapter one of Genesis builds up to a thrilling climax – the creation of man. The next chapter, Genesis two, focuses specifically on the creation of mankind. Genesis chapters one and two are not contradictory creation accounts, but rather complementary. Chapter two is about the making of man, the making of his home, and the making of his companion.

Like chapter one, it is fundamentally important. It lays the essential foundation for our understanding between sexes as well as laying the framework for marriage.

Today there is a tsunami-like wave building to bring about a re-definition of marriage in our culture, and indeed, our world.

That is why this chapter is so important to revisit, reaffirm and recommit to as God's word on the matter. We would do well to pay attention to it, believe it, to be bold enough to place our commitment on it, and not to run from it but rest on it.

The situation in chapter two is this: Man is by himself. There is no other like him. God makes him a companion.

We will look at this passage in three stages:

- Adam's Need for a Companion
- God's Making of his Companion
- Adam's Unity with his Companion

### PCEA Family Camp Talk — 3

#### 1. Adam's Need for a Companion (2:18-20)

*"It is **not good** for the man to **be alone**. I will make a helper suitable for him."* (v.18)

Throughout chapter one we hear God say again and again at the end of each day, "it was good." But there was one thing that wasn't quite right – man was by himself.

So what God does is bring all the animals to Adam for naming. But why does he do that?

One reason we can deduce is to help Adam *begin his work of ruling over the world by ruling over the animals* (c.f. 1:28). To name something or someone is to imply authority over that thing or person. There are examples in the Old Testament where defeated kings would be renamed by the victorious king (e.g. 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17). They could do that because they now had the authority to do it. Secondly, it would *show Adam that he was alone*. Most likely as he was naming the animals he came to realise that they came in pairs but he had no pair. He was alone. He had no companion. He probably also came to realise that there was nothing like him. We can imagine it created a longing in his heart. Man was not made for 'hermitship,' to be a recluse, to be alone. Man was made for companionship, fellowship, relationship.

*"But for Adam no **suitable helper** was found."* (v.20b)

These words have theological punch. 'Helper': it does *not* mean a servant, nor a slave, nor someone inferior, nor someone lower, nor someone less important. But it means a companion, someone to live next to him, someone to live side by side with him, someone fit for him, suitable. It means they

### Graeme Hart

would match, fit together, correspond, designed to be complementary. The word 'indispensable' would be very appropriate here. Absolutely necessary, essential, can't do without!

There was not found *this* sort of *helper* for him. Or...there was not found for him an *indispensable complementary companion* among animals.

You know the significance of this? A dog cannot actually be 'man's best friend'! A dog is not an *indispensable complementary companion*! Companionship runs deeper than friendship between man & animal – much deeper. It's physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual. All these aspects unique to our image.

Adam was to be given someone with whom he could rule over creation. Someone with whom he could share mutual companionship. Physical companionship, emotional companionship, intellectual companionship, spiritual companionship, sexual companionship.

At times my wife travels to Tasmania without me to visit family. During those times life around home is not same without her and I'm reminded she is my *indispensable complimentary companion*.

I know of an elderly man whose wife died a few years before him. They had been married over 60 years. Each time I visited him there was a sense of lostness about him. To him, she was his indispensable complementary companion.

Imagine how different *society* would be if all husbands viewed their wives as their indispensable complementary companions! Imagine how much lower would

family violence levels be! Imagine how much greater would be the respect and honour given to women!

Imagine how different *church* would be if all husbands believed their wives were indispensable complimentary companions! It would mean the marriages within the church would not mimic marriages outside the church.

We husbands need our wives! God has wired us that way! Treat them well. Love them well.

For you boys who don't have a wife yet: if the Lord gives you a wife...treat her well, love her well. She will be your indispensable complementary companion!

But speaking more generally, if you are married, be considerate of those who are single or divorced or widowed. Remember the longing and loneliness you once felt when you were unmarried. And don't just sympathise – empathise! Put yourself in their position.

And if you are single...know that singleness is from the Lord. It may be for a time, a season. Whether he gives you a spouse or not, focus on Christ – he is your ultimate Indispensable Companion! Colossians 3:4 says, He "is our life!" He is described as "our Helper" – the One who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, the One who meets our needs.

He is the "helper of the fatherless" (Ps. 10:14).

He is "my helper; the LORD is the upholder of my life." (Ps. 54:4).

"The LORD is on my side as my helper" (Ps. 118:7).

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2).

"Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20).

If you are single, know that loneli-

ness will not last forever. At death all your longings & loneliness will disappear forever! You will be ushered into the glorious presence of the Lover of your soul. In his rapturous glory you will be satisfied more fully than a thousand lifetimes ever could!



Phillip Medhurst Collection, St. Georges, Kidderminster

## **2. God's Making of the Companion (2:21-23)**

Here we read about God making Adam's indispensable complementary companion. This reinforces what has just been said about her.

Here is the world's first anaesthetic, the first surgery! God takes out one of Adam's ribs. Eve was made out of a rib. She was not made out of a separate clump of dust. She was made out of something more intimate... a part of him.

Notice from which bone she was made. It was not from the foot, otherwise she would have been lower than him. It was not a bone from the head, otherwise she would have been above him. But it was a bone from Adam's

side so that she would be equal with him, side by side, close to his heart.

Even the bone which God chose speaks of her indispensable complementary companionship she would provide. There was co-dependency.

Even Apostle Paul picks up on the co-dependency between a man and woman:

*...man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man....In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman (1 Cor. 11:8-9, 11-12).*

We need each other. We are not independent of each other. Here is where the Bible's view on women is vastly different from that if our secular world and Islam. Our secular world today would (I think) mock and ridicule these things. Oh, that they would know Whom they are mocking and ridiculing! Then in the other corner, we have Islam. According to Muhammed, women lack common sense because their minds are deficient (Sura 2:228). The Quran says a woman's testimony counts half of a man's testimony (Sura 2:282), that a man may be polygamous with up to four wives (Sura 4:3), that a Muslim polygamist may simply get rid of one of his undesirable wives (Sura 4:129), it allows husbands to hit their wives (Sura 4:34) and mature men to marry prepubescent girls (Sura 65:1,4) ([http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/women\\_top\\_ten.htm](http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Arlandson/women_top_ten.htm)) (<http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Wood/>

women.htm)

However the Bible, from the very first pages, paints a beautifully positive picture of women! In fact, as God's last creative act on day six, in a sense he leaves the best, most beautiful and most attractive until last! And doesn't Adam know it! When God "brought her to the man," this was their wedding day! Adam says,

*This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (v.23).*

His short period of loneliness and of longing immediately vanishes! Here is his beautifully designed, indispensable, complementary companion for life!

Now notice what Adam does NOT do: Adam does NOT grunt like a cave man! His first recorded words are passionate poetry! She is unlike anything he has ever seen. More beautiful than a sunrise. More delightful than a rose. More precious than a diamond. He realises she is made for him. His beautiful indispensable complementary companion in all things physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, sexual.

By calling her "woman" he is in no way saying she is inferior or lower or under him. In fact, he is declaring this God-given companion is part of him and they need each other.

Imagine if all the Christian husbands in the churches around Australia viewed their wives this way. Imagine how Christian marriages would change! Imagine how they would shine the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ brighter in their families, in their congregations, in their schools, in their work places, in their neighbourhoods, in their community groups!

### **3. Adam's Unity with his Companion (2:24-25)**

Verse 24 is a commentary on the whole exciting event. It gives us important information on the na-

ture of all marriages.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother...*

His emotional ties and priorities are now with his wife. His main focus of attention is on his wife, not his parents. The marriage relationship now supersedes the parent/child relationship. The marriage relationship even supersedes the mate/mate relationship that we have in Australia.

*...and hold fast to his wife...*

He will be united to or cleave to his wife. They will 'glue' themselves to each other. It describes man's action to his wife. Not the other way round!

*...and they shall become one flesh.*

This is more than just sexual intercourse which was God's plan and design BEFORE sin entered the world through the Fall. God's plan is that this happens in the safe, secure, trust-building, blessed boundary of marriage. It is also the making of a new family unit.

Martin Luther has some very important and relevant words relating to marriage. They were particularly aimed at practices of the Roman Catholic Church but nevertheless apply also to our secular world's practice of living together in de facto relationships or attempts to redefine marriage.

*It is God's order and institution that a man and a woman should unite (in marriage) in a proper way, which Moses here indicates by saying that the Lord God, that is, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, brought the woman to the man. Let us therefore learn from these words to defend marriage against the wicked blasphemies of those who revile it. It is something very wonderful that God instituted holy wedlock in the state of innocence.*

Here in the second chapter of Genesis we discover God's design for marriage: one man, one

woman.

What does this mean for us today?

It means that polygamy has no place in God's design. But that is not exactly what we see in the Old Testament! We read about Jacob and David and Solomon having multiple wives! Even though God allowed it, polygamy was never part of his beautiful design for marriage. If it were, God would have given Adam two or more wives. Polygamy is actually an outflow, a product, a consequence of the Fall.

It means that same-sex marriage has no place in God's design. This also is a product of the Fall. As you have probably heard, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. It is Eve who is Adam's beautifully designed, indispensable, complementary companion, not another man.

It means that male chauvinism has no place in God's design. Domestic violence (emotional, physical, sexual) has no place in God's design. It also is a product of the Fall.

It means that feminism has no place in God's design. It also is a product of the Fall.

Polygamy, same-sex marriage, male chauvinism, feminism are all methods of Satan to mess up God's beautiful design of marriage. They are sinful people's rebellious perversions of what God designed in the beginning to be good...very good!

As we come to a close, it must be stressed that marriage is not an end in itself. No one ever gets married and lives 'happily ever after.' There is no 'happily ever after' on *this* earth. It is full of sin and filled with pain, even in marriage. If you, by God's grace, experience a happy marriage it also will end in tears because one of you will die.

Marriage is not an end in itself. Marriage was always made and designed to point to a *better marriage*, that is Christ and his Church! In fact, it is this better marriage that becomes the standard bearer, the standard by which all other marriages are measured.

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves him-*

*self. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Here we have every marriage's standard bearer. Marriage is always meant to point to the better marriage.

The unity between man and woman in the creation week is foundational to understanding the unity between Christ and his bride, the Church. It's a beautiful description of the superglue-like love that will never let us go! Christ holds onto his bride and will never let her go.

If you're a Christian, that's good news for you! Christ will never let you go. Ever! It means that he laid down his life for you so that you might be re-formed, freed, and faithful. He's going to return. On that day the bride and the Groom (Christ and his

Church) will be together for ever and they *will* live happily ever after!

Until then, we have a life to live in a sinful world that hates the church, hates the gospel, and hates Christ. But we are given hope. We are given promises.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword....No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35, 36-39).*

Praise God for that!

*The Rev. Graeme Hart ministers at the Reformed Presbyterian Church in McKinnon, Melbourne.*

## Oh Really?

### Ethical Brinkmanship

The tradie puts his paintbrush away and places the sign next to the park bench which he just painted: *Wet paint; Wait for sign to be removed before using bench.* People walk past and think: 'Okay, better use the bench further down.' But one philosophically minded type had just read the musings of Plato and thought: 'Is that bench really wet? Wet-ness is a concept and the mind can decide to work with it as it pleases. I will sit on that bench.' On coming home, his wife scolded him and

went shopping for a new suit.

Such mental gymnastics are frequently used to arrive at conclusions which support particular desires in a person or in a society. We now have the situation in some church denominations where the idea has taken root that the Bible is to be understood according to the spirit of the age in which the reader of the Scriptures lives at a particular time. The real danger then is that one's culture and the spirit of the day carry more weight than what the Spirit in the Scripture

### Herm Zandman

teaches us.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, on that premise there is the ongoing debate regarding the question whether women should serve in the church in the offices of elder and deacon, for instance. Given the age in which we live and understanding the way women have developed, the time is ripe to give them their due and appoint them to leadership position. After all, what the Apostle Paul wrote in his day to Timothy (1 Timothy 2: 11-15) was good and neces-

sary in his time presumably, but we now live in an enlightened age far beyond where stodgy Paul plied his trade. We must go with the times. This is the Age of Aquarius, the age of the water carrier, the age of the servant, in which all mankind is to be of service to each other and in which service women are not to be denied their rightful place, despite the declarative nature of Scripture on this issue. It is time.

### A journey without a licence

Now, let me take you on a journey. Let me take you on a journey applying this reasoning of deterministic contemporariness and apply it to Scripture in its entirety, a journey in which there is an acceptance of today's culture and popular opinion that does not allow the Scriptures as the Word of God to have the last word.

We will start our journey right at the beginning. The Bible informs us that God created the world in six literal days (as per the Hebrew word 'yom'). In comes the teaching of evolution with the claim that science conclusively proves that the world is millions of years old. Christians are in a bind: They know that evolution is true; they know that God created the universe. All right then, God has used the evolutionary process to shape the universe. Problem solved. Let us continue the journey. It now follows that death is not the result of sin. Out of dead matter life evolved and life evolved from simple to complex through a process of decay (death) and slowly increasing growth and complexity. Sin is not an issue, life just is. Man comes on the scene through megamultiple chance occurrences and mutations. Man develops a societal cohesion with increased complexity. This is called social evolution: it has arrived and continues to evolve. In order to live together, man develops what is

commonly called a conscience on which he bases ethics, which are what the conscience develops as ways in which to live and are now applied to daily living. This evolves further and further over time. We get to the point that the Bible teaches the words of Asaph (Psalm 73:22), where the inspired writer exclaims, "I was as a beast before thee!" In saying this, Asaph is not really confessing sin and guilt. He merely suffers a flash back to the time when man was not evolved to the point of ethical refinement of his day; he suffered a momentary relapse; he remembers kind of intuitively that once his kind *was beastly*. Just so, David *appears* to confess sin in the story of David and Bathsheba. No, it is not a sad story, it is just – a story. A *sad* story implies a value judgement in terms of right and wrong, of sin. So, when David cries out (Psalm 51:4), "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," he is not really confessing sin and guilt, he merely suffers a flash back to the time when man was not evolved to the point of ethical refinement of his day -- a momentary relapse. Theistic evolution excludes the concept of sin moments. It merely signals lapses in the evolving process or retardation. It is done to people, not *by* people.

Marriage was initially to be between a man and a woman. How chance evolution arrived at this port is unknown – unless the God of Providence caused a tweak while using evolution, but it was excellent, as it promoted the further evolving of the highest species in the

animal kingdom, leading to communities through which social evolution could progress. Nowadays this stringent boundary is superfluous, as mankind is abounding and alternate types of co-habitation form a logical expansion of what was once useful, but is now archaic.

Let's go to the mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments. He was given the commandment that murder is not to be done. He was given this commandment, not because it is wrong necessarily to take a human life; no, it was because there needs to be an awareness in the human consciousness that life is to be regarded as valuable for the survival of the species. However, if there are elements in the species which are retrograde (not evolved in terms of physical, mental, or emotional development as the rest), they may well be removed for the sake of the health of the species. If some get in the way of what the more mature of the species wish to entertain or develop, then the survival of the species may well rule on their abortion. This could not be done so easily in



### Teaching Vacancy New Zealand

The Reformed Christian School Association in Upper Hutt, New Zealand, is seeking a teacher to teach upper primary at our Christian School. Our aim is to develop a biblically consistent world and life view in our students based on the Reformed faith.

Applicants should be committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education. This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a small covenant school, and we look forward to your application. If you have any questions or would like more information please do not hesitate to contact us. Short term contracts will be considered. Please forward your C.V. or any questions you may have to:

[board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz](mailto:board@silverstreamchristian.school.nz)

the time of Moses, nor did it need to be done given the limited population; but it is different in today's world with man being a burden to Mother Earth and natural selection is a mechanism in God's evolutionary system.

Along the same path, our journey takes us to the social evolution of women. Initially, it was a perfectly logical act of randomness (or divinely guided morality) that women were there as men's helpmeets, as objects of procreation. After all, societies were to evolve and women were at the hub of this; many ancient people understood this. Their knowledge has been carefully preserved by the Gaia movement, the New Age movement which grants the fertilisation role to the sun and worships the Earth as mother of all living. This role of women continued through the so-called patriarchal era in which men ruled and women followed (so the saying goes). But social evolution was not to be denied and women slowly but surely wrested themselves away from the male dominance. It was the natural order of things. And now our social consciousness has outlived the temporal, Biblical writings, has transcended the patriarchal modus operandus. Now Christians may see Biblical approaches to creational order and to ethics as allegorical, as those parts of the journey which hold useful indices for mankind's social consciousness.

Let us continue the journey to the part where the Messiah is announced to the world: where He actually arrives in the flesh, walks around in the Middle East, suffers on the cross at Calvary, is raised, and has now ascended into heaven. There are people who believe this as historical fact. Not so, says Karl Barth. The God we worship is 'wholly other.' He does not enter in to a broken world, cannot be tainted by the atrocities of the Great War and such like. God is wholly other and Christ is

just a concept, 'the Christ-idea.' The allegory, for that is what it is, is mankind's plumbline for the collective consciousness, depicting what is being targeted in the evolutionary progression; the person who historically walked the earth being the furthest advanced. The Christ-idea will find its fulfilment when the Jewish nation has arrived at the moral consciousness epitomised in this person who once walked among men.

Today's followers of Christ are called 'Christians,' little Christs, earnestly striving to grow and develop (evolve) to the attaining of this Christ-idea. Jesus was well up the ladder, his followers struggle after. Furthermore, this Christ-idea is a concept embraced by *all* mankind, albeit under various other descriptors. It is essentially the same for all who drift towards and even strive for the highest moral consciousness. Thus, the World Council of Churches can happily find common ground with other religious groupings and share religiosity with them on an 'I am okay, you are okay' basis.

### Crashing the vehicle

You know, I will stop my journey here. The voyage has led from the Garden of Eden where man set himself up as judge over God's creational declarations to where man is today doing exactly the same thing, turning the Bible's dictates into allegorical stories which are useful to guide man collectively to the higher levels of social evolution. The inevitable result of making the Bible subordinate to historical trends sets the Church up beautifully for Satan's realm of destruction. Reductionism, reducing Biblical authority to subjectivism to man's personal opinions and desires, is probably the most powerful tool of deception and destruction in the devil's arsenal.

It is deplorable that theological seminaries yearn to attain to uni-

versity status. If they achieve that recognition, it comes at a price. Universities are required to do what the Athenians in Acts 17 craved, that is to have a well-developed research department through which new ideas are to be explored and published. Funding depends on it. It forces professors and doctors to probe and ferret where man has not trodden before, leading into lecture halls where the wisdom of God is foolishness to man, rather than the other way around. It leads to so-called situational ethics applied where Biblical dictums do not suit and are inconvenient. It leads to denominations where the Bible is no longer the centre of teaching, but merely an allegorical book with interesting stories that may or may not be followed.

The result is women leading churches, homosexuals preaching the (a) gospel, Christ being a lovely example, man once more feeling good about himself with his self-restored and ever-evolving paradise in social-consciousness progression, sitting on the park bench soaking up the sun while contemplating the transcendent concept of wetness ultimately leading to the ruination of his suit.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, RD, and A Hagg. "Sons and Daughters Prophecy." *Una Sancta*, 11 March 2017: 67.

*Dr Herm Zandman is a Christian Educationalist who has taught in a number of Christian schools in New Zealand and Australia. Presently he is living in Western Australia where he is a member of the Free Reformed Church of Southern River.*

# The Miracles At Calvary

The Torn Curtain

Matthew 27:51a

Sjirk Bajema

This text is found in the New Testament. Of course, you say. It's in Matthew's Gospel. In fact, it's just about at the end of his Gospel. So it's definitely in the New Testament. But when does the New Testament actually start? Has that got you thinking? Did you always think it was when you get to that break in the Bible – the blank page just before Matthew's Gospel?

There is a quote you might know, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, while the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." The difference between the two testaments is described by saying that one conceals and the other reveals.

So, when does that change actually happen? At which point does the whole mystery of the coming of Jesus Christ become open to all believers? Considering the Jewish audience he was writing to, isn't it precisely here – in Matthew 27:51a – that Matthew gets to the heart of the matter? Here the Old is no longer concealed! The glory is no longer hidden. The veil which Moses had to put over his face when he came away from meeting the Lord has gone.

What greater symbolism could there be of the completion of Old Testament messianic prophecy than this supernatural opening up of the place where no ordinary believer could ever go? The place, in fact, where only one man could ever go – and that only once a year, through great ceremony and a cloud of smoke!

**This is the worst possible tear**  
The temple curtain had to be torn when Jesus died. The sacrifices were all finished, because the

ultimate sacrifice had been offered. And God provided the proof in the sign of the torn curtain. Remember what the miracles in scripture were for? They

## Matthew 27:45-54

<sup>45</sup> From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" – which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

<sup>47</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

<sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the rest said, "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

<sup>50</sup> And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

all pointed to what God would do or had done in our Lord. They are, if you like, sacraments – pointing and confirming where and who Jesus Christ is. Charles Spurgeon even goes so far as to say that the torn curtain shows us the opening of the gates of paradise. That's what the loud voice from the cross did. Our bleeding Lord has the key of heaven.

This had to be the worst possible tear – nothing else could

have made the point. And this was always meant to be what would happen. To understand this more we need to go back to when the Lord first told the Israelites why there had to be a tabernacle and what it was to be made of. It was the tabernacle which became the temple in Jerusalem. At last the tabernacle tent had a permanent home. The contents of that tabernacle tent, though, were exactly what God had ordained so many years ago. The place where he would be among them was to be as special as ever. And the costliness of the materials used to make that tent proved how impossible replacing it would be.

In Exodus chapter 26, we read about the making of this special tent. The incredible detail and skill of the workmen is described, and the undeniable quality of the materials they used. It was the best – whether 1200 years BC or at the time of our passage in 30 AD. This was made to last. The length and the width certainly showed that. For where else have you ever seen or heard of curtaining this long and this thick?

Now, the thickness we have to especially note. It is 1.8 metres wide. And our curtains might at best be, what, a couple of millimetres thick – perhaps half a centimetre at the most?

Someone might say, though, that the material was different. But that still cannot account for this kind of width, because this was superior by far to anything else normally made back then.

This was the worst possible tear – simply because that tear couldn't ever possibly be there.

You see, this curtain didn't come with the best five or ten or even lifetime guarantee. It was made to last for centuries.

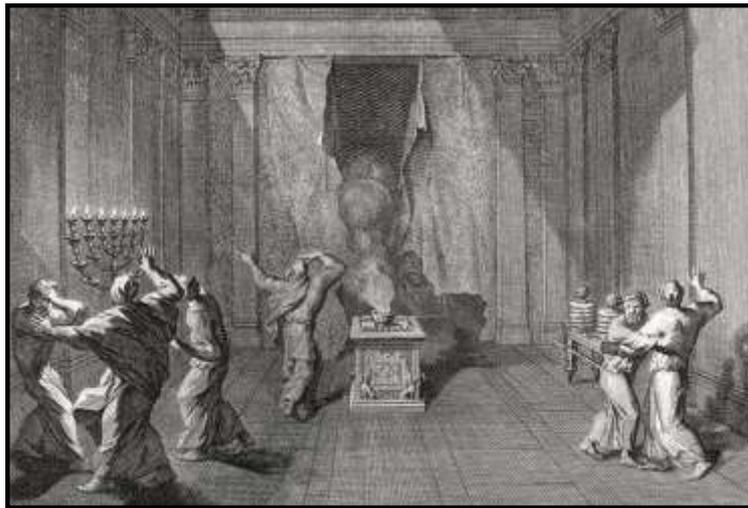
Just in case you're doing some maths in your head, and working out the time between Exodus 26 and the time of our Lord, you'll need to remember this is the third temple. While the way it was built is the same, even grander in some respects, all the furnishings were new within the last fifty years. So there could be no tear from wear here. And even if that were possible, there would have been rips all over it, and the tearing would most likely have come from the bottom up, or across – as we know, is usually the case. Nor should we think this happened because of the earthquake. Matthew would have mentioned the earthquake first if that were the case.

The tent was torn because it was in the way. Its function as the most important room divider in the world was now unnecessary, since its purpose had been fulfilled. That's why it was done away with in the most miraculous way. You see, it had been through this curtain that the High Priest would have passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place. There was also an identical curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Priest's Court and the altar.

Some commentators think that curtain may be the one referred to here. They say that because what is really being done away with here is the Levitical Priesthood. And that was a closed society. No one could simply join it. Priestly privileges were not available to anybody else. And so those glorious furnishings – while a beautiful sight to see – were never seen in earlier days. Ac-

cess to the temple, previously restricted to the Levite priesthood, was now thrown open to all. And this is the reason for believing that the curtain torn apart was that priests' curtain, which kept them separate from the rest of Israel. Now it was useless, and everybody could look inside to see what was previously hidden.

Considering what the Holy of Holies had become, this is a good



*Phillip Medhurst Collection, St. Georges, Kidderminster*

point. Because in the past, the Holy of Holies had had certain powerful ornaments and objects. Hebrews 9, the verses 3 till 5, describes them. They included the golden altar of incense, and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. It was in that ark that there were also the gold jar of manna, Aaron's rod that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. And above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the place of atonement.

But now, in this third temple, everything was gone. The Holy of Holies was an empty room. Especially so, because the Shekinah, the glory of the Lord, was no longer there. The Rabbis acknowledge this in their historical writings. They state that these five key elements were missing in the last Temple – the ark, the

holy fire, the Shekinah, the spirit of prophecy, and the Urim and Thummim.

But regardless of all this, the Holy of Holies was where the Lord God had made his presence. And if his people had returned to him in reformation he would have been there again. Yet no more – this was the worst possible tear.

Because it was only physical it could be replaced, as in fact it was. Temple worship still went on for some years after this. That, however, was now definitely only going through the motions. There could never again be in this place the presence and blessing of the Lord, as of old. The Messiah's work on earth was now finished, and the New Testament had arrived.

### **But it will never need repair**

Forget it! Christ's body is the true temple, living in each believer's heart through his Holy Spirit. As Klaas Schilder wrote, "This is a sign designed not to accompany the prophecy of Christ, but to seal it, and also to prepare for the prophesying of the Christ which will take place in the future by the Spirit of Pentecost... Moreover, God is not only prophesying... He is also beginning the new dispensation. The exclusive caste of the priesthood is deprived of all its privileges. After this all those who believe and through their faith approach God, will be called priests. That which Pentecost will realise to the full has its beginning here."

How can we know this? I mean, could all this come possibly through one tear, devastat-

ing as it was?

Let's note two things in connection with this:

*1. The time the curtain was torn.*

"At that moment", verse 51 begins. Which moment? The moment Jesus died. The exact split second he became the slaughtered Lamb, was the precise moment the Temple went out of business! It was at that very point in time that a man had the right to enter heaven because of Jesus' perfect obedience to the Law.

When the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus in John 2:19, his answer to them was a riddle: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." To that the Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" John continued: "But the temple he spoke of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken."

That moment signalled the entire fulfilment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies. It let the world know that the time for ministering to the Lord God with limited human devices was now over. Their usefulness had been subsumed by the unlimited and divine One himself.

*2. The effect of Christ's work.*

Now the road to heaven has been opened, as shown symbolically in a way that takes true faith to a wider and greater dimension than ever before. The incident in John 4, where Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman, brings this out. You might remember that, when Jesus was getting a bit too close personally with his words, she raised the perpetual debate between the Samaritans and the Jews about where you are meant to worship the Lord. But Jesus didn't let her go then, either. In-

stead of letting her turn the discussion, he answered her in a way that took it further than she had ever imagined. While pointing out that the Samaritans had been quite wrong to worship on Mount Gerazim, he said, in verse 24, that the time was coming when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Now is that time! (A time for all ages.)

And Jesus, by talking to a woman of that despised, mixed-blood nation, demonstrated that many other nations, not just Jews, would come into that Kingdom. The tearing of the curtain ripped away not only the Old Testament ceremonial law, it also took away the barrier that had stood between Jew and Gentile. Everyone now had access to the throne of grace, through the one great atonement and mediator, Jesus Christ!

Hebrews 10, the verses 19 till 21, rings this out. It says, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

The way directly to heaven has been opened up – and what a line that is! No interference ever on this line! Nothing and no one else can get in the way. For we go through him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In the words of the early Church Father, Chrysostom, "The veil was rent. Thus our Lord showed his power and wrath, and at the same time his love. He intimated that what was before inaccessible, was now made easy of access,

and that Heaven would be opened, and that he our Great High Priest would now enter the Holy of Holies. They had said, 'If he be King of Israel, let him come down from the cross;' but he proves himself the King of the World.' They had derided him, saying, 'You that destroys the temple,' He showed that it-- the temple – would be desolate, by rending the Veil."

**This makes all the difference for God's own**

At the end of this we come back to its beginning. The change is devastating. This was the beginning of a whole new dispensation. It makes the most amazing difference for our personal lives. But it was always on the cards, or rather, I should say, it was always in his Word. Jesus, the One who every time he was in the temple during his life on earth cleansed it in one way or another, has now cleaned it up for ever!

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# Children under the Banner — Daniel 3



# Prescribed Search Work

## MAY 2017

*Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10—11 years; Junior 9 years and under*

### SENIOR AND INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8)

#### 1 SAMUEL chapter 12

1. What was the reply of the children of Israel when Samuel asked if he had defrauded or oppressed them?
2. Why did Samuel ask the Lord to send thunder and rain during the wheat harvest?
3. How did Samuel answer the people when they confessed their sin in asking a king? (3 verses only)

#### Chapter 13

4. What did Saul do when Samuel did not come to Gilgal within seven days?
5. Why was God to take the kingdom from Saul and give it to a man after his own heart?

#### Chapter 14

6. What reason did Jonathan give his armour-bearer for going over to fight with the Philistines?
7. What oath did Saul make the people swear that day?
8. How did the people rescue Jonathan from death?

### JUNIOR

#### MARK chapter 6

1. When Jesus came into his own country, was he able to do any mighty works?
2. What did Herod do when Herodias' daughter asked for John the Baptist's head? (2 verses)
3. Why was Jesus moved with compassion toward the people that followed him?
4. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, and were troubled, what did he say to them?

**Please send the answers to:**  
**Mrs I Steel**  
**PO Box 942**  
**Epping NSW 1710**  
**The questions for the whole year**  
**are available from the above postal**  
**address or by email at:**  
[iesteel@gmail.com](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

# The World in the Banner

## Egypt: Bring Back Our Girls

On the night of 26 January the Girgis brothers went out to irrigate crops. However, one brother, Rezeiky, remained at home to watch over his wife, elderly mother and sister Hanan (18) who was engaged to be married. At about 10:30pm a Muslim neighbour came to the house and told Rezeiky that a thief had been seen lurking around their livestock shed.

Believing he had been duly warned, Rezeiky bedded down in the shed to protect the family's livestock and equipment while the women slept soundly in the house. When the Girgis brothers returned home at around 3am they found the front door open and Hanan missing. Whilst one slipper was found by the door, her clothes, jewellery and Identity card were still in her room. For two days the family searched for Hanan to no avail. Suspecting their Muslim neighbour had lured Rezeiky to the shed purposely so the women would be alone and Hanan could be abducted, the family accused Mohamed Ahmed Nubi Soliman (27), a criminal and cousin of the neighbour, of abducting their daughter. Although Soliman admitted to the police that he was indeed involved, he was not arrested.

The Civil Status Authority at Esna Police Station told the family that national security services had issued Hanan a new Identity card. The family then headed off to the national security headquarters in Luxor, only to have officers there deny having any knowledge of Hanan's whereabouts. Frustrated and desperate, the family then staged a peaceful protest outside the security offices. The police responded violently, leaving the 23-year-old Girgis brother with a broken leg. The family's lawyer, Barsoum Wahba, has accused the police of 'complicity and apathy'.

The worst thing about this horror story is that it is not unusual. Every year, hundreds of Coptic girls are either kidnapped or seduced by

fundamentalist Muslims, before being violently raped, terrorised, forcibly converted and married off to Islamists. Essentially these girls are being trafficked into Islam and sexually enslaved. Because the organised Islamisation rings operate with the tacit consent and overt co-operation of Islamic clerics, law enforcement officers, local government officials and prosecutors, most of these girls never see their families again.

The situation has deteriorated markedly in recent years. Not only are the Muslim masses more radicalised, but during the years of 'Arab Spring' insecurity (from January 2011 through to the ouster of Morsi in July 2013) many thousands of Islamists – including at least 500 members of the terrorist group Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya -- either escaped or were released from Egyptian prisons. Ebram Louis, the founder of the Egyptian Association of Victims of Abduction and Enforced Disappearances (AVAFD), commented in June 2014: 'Before the revolution five or six girls would disappear each month. Now the average is 15.' That is one girl every two days! Of some 550 disappearances AVAFD investigated between 2011 and 2014, only ten girls were recovered.

The only difference between what happens in Egypt (and Pakistan) at the hands of local Muslims, and in Iraq at the hands of ISIS, or in Nigeria at the hands of Boko Haram, is that in Egypt (as in Pakistan) the sexual enslavement is quietly unspectacular and occurs one girl at a time. To Islamists, Christian girls are legitimate booty and halal (permissible). Meanwhile, the thousands of parents of these girls are weeping and lamenting, crying 'bring back our girls'. It is difficult to imagine a scenario more challenging to one's faith.

Two thousand years ago King Herod tried to thwart God's purpose, causing weeping and lamentation in Egypt (Matthew 2:16-18).

Today, as Islam does likewise, know it will fail just as dismally. 'Among those who know me I mention Rahab [Egypt] ...' (from Psalm 87) and 'Blessed be Egypt my people...' (from Isaiah 19:16-25). And so we pray...

+ by Elizabeth Kendal, *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 398 | Wed 15 Mar 2017

## Overhaul Of Abortion Laws Overdue

The Labour Party got it right. New Zealand's abortion laws do need an overhaul. All of the evidence points to our society having changed in the 40 years since the procedure became legal.

As I've previously written, we made aborting calves illegal three years ago on the basis that it was "inhumane" and forced vets to breach their duty of care. It is now obvious that this logic also applies to human babies. The incredible advances in technology and science have given us the ability to peer into the womb and study its contents in detail. Social media and search engines have made this information available to all of us.

And what that science tells us, in the words of one secular humanist, is that from day one that clump of cells is an individual member of the human species. By week two that new member of our species has the beginnings of its own brain. By week six its very own heart is beating. That is why secular humanists, feminists and others beyond the church walls now openly oppose abortion.

We know too, thanks to a recent poll by ALRANZ – New Zealand's pro abortion lobby group – that support for abortion is lowest when it is about choice only.

The most critical part of the report, for those who believe in life, is that it asked 1000 people about their support for abortion in different situations. These situa-

tions ranged from the mother's life being endangered by the pregnancy, to the mother simply not wanting to be a mum. As the extremity of the scenario decreased, so too did the support for abortion. In fact, by the time that respondents were asked whether abortion should be available for those who just don't want to be a mum, support had plummeted from 77 per cent (when a mother's life is endangered) to 51 per cent. That means half of the country is either opposed or is unconvinced, by the claim that abortion is merely a choice.

Ironically, supporters of abortion say the law needs changing to make it easier for those women who just want access to the choice. But most importantly we know the law is out of date because babies in the womb are no longer voiceless. The survivors of abortions performed in the 1970s and 1980s are now old enough and confident enough to speak out. In fact, they are even setting up groups, like *The Abortion Survivors Network*, which requires members to have documentation supporting their story.

And those stories are harrowing – they have survived saline abortions meant to essentially burn them to death in the womb, or procedures meant to cut them into pieces inside the womb, before they were removed.

Overwhelmingly they say that they are thankful to have been given life, and they plead for us to give that right to every unborn child. Many of those most prominent voices, like Melissa Ohden or Josiah Presley, say they forgive the women who tried to abort them, and hold no grudge – they simply want every child to have a chance at life.

So yes, we need to change our laws. We need women seeking an abortion to no longer be seen as criminals, but rather the doctors willing to perform these procedures. We need to strengthen the law and make it clear that abortion is only there as a last resort in a desperate situation.

And we need to re-target funding

to adoption services and support, to make sure our country is known for its compassion – for both mother and baby. We also need to increase support for women going through a crisis pregnancy.

Most of all, we need to stop pretending that death is a moderate solution, and start giving the right to life to all members of our species.  
+ Narelle Henson, *Waikato Times NZ*

### **Coopers, Qantas and the Bible Society**

As ARPA noted in their mail out this week, "a video debate about same-sex 'marriage' has incensed gay activists who are now calling for a boycott against Coopers Brewery. ABC News reports that at least two Sydney hotels have already stopped selling Coopers beer. A video clip, made by the Bible Society, features Liberal MPs Andrew Hastie and Tim Wilson drinking Coopers beer and discussing their opposing perspectives on same-sex 'marriage.' Mr Wilson, who is gay, supports a redefinition of the marriage laws while Mr Hastie, a Christian, opposes any redefinition. The video aims to promote civil, light-hearted discussion on the topic and included Coopers beer because the company provides financial support to the Bible Society."

Increasingly it appears that freedom of speech only applies if you agree with what is spoken, and those that want to speak about their values, such as traditional marriage, no longer have a right to even speak. Bill Muehlenberg notes in his blog at <https://billmuehleberg.com/2017/03/15/beer-bibles-bullies-bigotry/>, "*If anything is absolutely crystal clear by now, it is this: those who scream the most about diversity, acceptance and tolerance are the most intolerant folks around. The secular left in general, and the militant homosexual lobby in particular, are obvious and blatant examples of this.*

*They are not in the least bit interested in allowing actual debate and discussion to take place about any*

*of their sacrosanct agenda items. We either agree fully with what they are pushing, or we must sit down and shut up. There is no middle ground here. Free speech is gone and what we have left is costly speech. To speak truth will cost. To suggest an alternative narrative, will have you branded as bigot, and more. The overt persecution against Christianity that we've been seeing in Australia is now turning into all out war against our faith and Bible based beliefs."*

This is all very real for the Australian Christian Lobby. They note on their web site that, "Almost every time we hire a venue for a conference or event, a social media campaign erupts calling us bigots and worse, designed to have us kicked out. Yes, Australia is a free country and people are welcome to use consumer boycotts as a tactic to exert political pressure. We do the same with advertisers who sexualise children, for example. But the difference is the tone and toxicity expressed by a large number of those, including leaders, from the LBGTIQ activist movement."

Sadly, there was another example of corporate bullying. Qantas is apparently 'lobbying' their senior executives to sign an open letter to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull pressuring him to break his election commitment on marriage. Qantas has set up a complex "telephone tree" and "buddy system" of chief executives, with specific business leaders being assigned colleagues to convince. Even the Australian newspaper considers this as bullying.

Freedom of speech should mean that people are allowed to freely speak their mind, argue for their point of view, and make their case. We are now seeing strong arm tactics that stop or limit this freedom, as people are forced into silence.

+ *Una Sancta*, 25 March 2017

# Missions in the Banner

More Photos From The Missions Awareness Tour To India — 20/12/2016-2/1/2017



Clockwise from top left: Community leaders in Chhapara; Elders Santosh & Vinod and families; Rev Shyam Babu and family; Group singing at Christmas programme; M. Kumar with Sunday School; Navigating the roads and the cows!; Vijay Nagar PPCCI; Assoc. Pastor Vishel Praveen with young ladies at Chhapara.

